

critical digest

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The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

Anderson Dooms Critics

Drama critics serve no necessary function in the theatre, Maxwell Anderson told WOR Martha Deane. The playwright who has had previous controversy with the critics sees the day when there will be no critics. There are fewer playhouses, fewer plays and fewer critics. Several reviewers are joining the ranks of the playwrights. When all the critics start writing plays there will be no reviewers. Anderson said that in the great theatre periods of Greece and Shakespeare there were no critics.

Summer Theatre Tryouts

Lawrence Langer's The Life of the Party received its world premiere at the Westport Country Playhouse. Garland, Journal American, thought that the play which poked fun at life behind the Iron Curtain, was a socially significant musical sans music that might have Broadway possibilities...R.C. Sherriff's Miss Mabel made its straw hat debut at Richard Aldrich's Falmouth, Massachusetts, Playhouse. Variety critic considered play, which already has been a hit in London and Paris, as a pleasantly contrived comedy that needed much pruning...Miranda, new comedy by Peter Blackmore staged at Ogunquit, Maine, Playhouse, isn't for Broadway or Hollywood in the opinion of Don, Variety...Perisienne, first production of Sam Wanamaker's "Festival Theatre" opened its pre-Broadway tour at Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Playhouse. Just, Variety wasn't impressed with production of Henri Becque's half century old script.

Three Shows Suspend

Texas Li'l Darlin', Mister Roberts and The Wisteria Trees will all temporarily suspend performances July 15. Latter two plays will reopen August 14, while musical will open August 21. All managements made clear that shows were not closing, just taking a month's vacation. Box offices at all three attractions remain open.

Chapman Explains Review

Chapman, News, filed a "so-so" report on Mike Todd's Peep Show. He liked some of the numbers, the pretty girls, the lavish scenery; but he admitted that much of the show he considered in such bad taste that he was embarrassed to be accompanied by women. Producer Todd read the review and phoned his thanks to Chapman for the "pro" review. To set the record straight, Chapman explained his position in his Sunday column. He reiterated that the show made him feel cheap. And if Todd takes this second review as a "rave", Chapman will feel even cheaper. Time magazine covered the incident in their "Press" Department.

Guest Column Time

Joshua Logan, subbing for Kilgallen, Journal-American, told why he insists that his male casts in Mister Roberts and South Pacific are not only required to keep in perfect physical shape, but why rehearsals are held at Bill Brown's Health Camp. He discovered, while in the Army, that both men and women like to look at healthy males as well as they do healthy females. Logan is also part owner of the famous men's health resort.

Critical Notes

Garland, Journal-American, will speak on "The Newspaper Critic and the commercial theatre" at the Lake Tarleton Club's "Seven Arts Festival at Pike, New Hampshire and at Fordham University Forum.

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' The Green Room Department '
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CRITICS SIGN WHITEWASHED... Winter Garden Theatre sign which features the critics charging down Broadway carrying sandwich signs has been scrapped by Mike Todd. It will be replaced with picture of showgirls shapely legs. Peep Show producer spent estimated \$6,000 to refurbish the Szyk caricatures. Winchell reports that Todd thinks he can draw in more business with the new sign than he could with the selection of highly edited phrases from the reviews. Sign would have been held up anyway until World-Telegram and Sun strike, which is now in its sixth week, was over.

HOW TO BE AN ACTOR... Easiest way to be a success on Broadway is to make sure your father is a millionaire, advises Burr, Theatre Time. If this isn't convenient, the Playbill columnist presents some sound straight forward advice on choosing a legitimate dramatic school.

BROADWAY IN LONDON... Beverly Baxter, critic of London Evening Standard, blasts current vogue of American plays in London. The British, he quipped, are so sensitive of their debt to the U.S. that the least they can do is give their national theatre over to American musicals. Critic referred to opening of Gerousel at the famous Drury Lane.

EVERY MAN A CRITIC... Drama producers beware, but TV is producing a new breed of family critics. John Mack, TV manufacturer, told Printer's Ink, that the reticence to speak out in the theatre is absent in the home. Mom talks back to Pop on just what she thinks of the current show on the screen.

AGE OF ADVERTISING... A Broadway theatre which housed a score of theatrical offices gave its tenants a full year's rent in cash if they would vacate. Owner boarded up office windows to make the base of a large outdoor sign.

SUMMER SHOW BUSINESS... Summer show business comes in different sizes and shapes, and Garland, Journal-American, likes them all. He finds a great amount of enjoyment from the non-Equity group. It is here that the critic has the chance of discovering new acting talent, and perhaps of even turning up a new play.

NO MOVIE REVIEW... Rice, Post, filed a memo to his editor explaining why he couldn't review the Russian picture "World Youth Festival" at the Stanley. He had just seen young American boys returning from the Boy Scout Jamboree. Thus the boys shown in the obviously Communistic propaganda film did nothing but disgust him. Rice, drama editor, subbed for the vacationing Post film reviewer.

PEEP'S ONCE OVER... Mike Todd's Peep Show promises to be one of the most discussed hits of recent days. Atkinson, Times, isn't convinced that the build-up, the action of the License Commissioner and the resulting publicity wasn't all part of the script...Wetts, Post, repeats how funny he thought the drum solo of "Peanuts" Menn was; though he can't explain why...Pollock, Compass, thinks Todd turned a timid soul in the sketches, none of which were as funny as they might have been if Bobby Clark was in the show, instead of just directing.

CAR WANTED... Stern, the Off Broadway & Summer Theatre editor of Show Business, took an ad in his own publication. He is hunting for "an attractive young lady or man with theatre know-how" to drive him to various summer theatres. He will arrange for the driver's free admission.

NEWS & NOTES

Clurman, New Republic, will not stage King Lear, due to conflicting schedules... INS School bills George Jean Nathan as drama's "Peter Panner"...Jean Carroll wondered what drama critics do in the summer. Denis, Compass, has the answer. With the shows closing, they rap each other.

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' Summer Theatres '
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The prop girl stole the reviews at the opening of The Doctor's Wife, an adaptation of two French classics written and staged by Norman Hall at the Circle Theatre on West 36th Street. Five daily critics thought NYC's latest theatre-in-the-round was more comfortable than other such units, but that the play was poorly done, the acting amateurish, the direction nil. Though Shanley, Times, disagreed with his colleagues. He thought the script was bad but the group showed promise. Ingenious portable scenery, carried on and off by attractive usherettes, was the hit of the show. Pepette Goldberg was the usher Garland, Journal-American, admired.

Pygmalion, done in theatre-in-the-round style at Rockland County Circle Playhouse Orangeburg, N.Y., won the applause of Coleman, Mirror. He tagged Oscar Miller and Huntley Wright as two youngsters destined to be stars...Rice, Post, witnessed a fine production of T.S.Eliot's Murder at the Cathedral at Lucille Lortel's White Barn Club Theatre at Westport, but he thinks Eliot stated his case for martyrdom more clearly and dramatically in The Cocktail Party...Lindsay's and Robinson's Your Uncle Dudley remained a dull comedy in the eyes of Garland, when he saw it revived at Ivy Tower, N.J. Playhouse. Though the production was well acted, it remained a well set museum piece that wasn't funny the first time. Garland also enjoyed the above mentioned Pygmalion though it poured the night he witnessed it.

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' Interview Round Up '
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JOHN LODER...Star of touring Anne of the 1000 Days considers the "subway circuit" audiences more responsive than Broadway audiences, he revealed on WCR Buddy Rogers. They aren't bamboozled by critics as the Broadway followers are. These patrons want "valid" theatre, strong and colorful. Their interest is in the theatre of ideas, not in the comedy of manners.

MIKE TODD...How does the producer of Peep Show pick those girls? He just looks for girls who have warmth, the kind of girls you would want to hold hands with, he admitted on WJZ Next Week in New York.

JAY GORNEY...Musical play hour every night before dinner finds Gorney household singing and shouting around the piano, but loud, Bald, Post, discovered. Gorney wrote score for Touch and Go. The family can indulge in this fashion because they live in a soundproof apartment once owned by Caruso.

LORENZO FULLER...Young singer who stops Kiss Me, Kate nightly with "Too Darned Hot" found the lyrics of the song lived up to the title so well that he can't play the Columbia record of his song on his WLIB early morning disc jockey show. Sheaffer, Eagle, detailed some of his many activities. In addition to the 8:30 AM radio program Fuller has two studios where he teaches music. He is also leader of an instrumental quartette and a vocal trio. A writer of sketches, his material is used by Yvonne Adair and Juanita Hall. MGM is considering a musical fantasy of his, and he has done background music for several short plays.

FRANCHOT TONE...Star of several hits in which he played writers of varying degrees of politics, Tone told WNBC Mary Margaret McBride that he has never written a word in his life. Actually he writes very few letters. He is now touring in a revival of The Second Man which may hit Broadway in the fall.

RANDOM NOTES

Mike Todd chased a Philadelphia drama critic for two blocks at the opening of Peep Show's tryout before he learned that the reviewer had a previous appointment.

' Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance '

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

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| 1. NY Times | 11. Newark News | 21. Catholic World |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune | 12. Women's Wear Daily | 22. Commonweal |
| 3. NY News | 13. Daily Worker | 23. Cue |
| 4. NY Mirror | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (PM, Star) | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post | 16. George Jean Nathan | 26. Newsweek |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse) | 17. Morning Telegraph | 27. Time |
| 8. NY Journal American | 18. Variety | 28. Nation |
| 9. NY World Telegram and Sun | 19. Billboard | 29. New Republic |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle | 20. Theatre Arts | 30. New Yorker |

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 2-9-14-22-25-29.
So-So: 16-30. None: 13.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 2-4-7-12-21-27.
So-So: 3-6-30. None: 13-15-24-25-28.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 27 votes. Con: 22. So-So: 6-29.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Broadhurst, 3/23/49. Pro: 21 votes. None: 5-10-11-13-16-24-28-29

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfeld, 12/8/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 6-21-28.
So-So: 16-19-22-23-27. None: 25.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-28-30.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. None: 28.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 26 Pro: Con: 16. So-So: 2-27-30.

Mister Roberts, Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Peep Show-Winter Garden, 6/28/50. Pro: 4-5-6-8-10-11-15-17-19-23.
Con: 1-2-12-26-27-28-30. So-So: 3-14-18.

Peter Pan-Imperial, 4/24/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 8-16-30. So-So: 6-14-19.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/50. Pro: 12 votes. Con: 1-4-7-8-19-19-23-29-30.
So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27. None: 25-28.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-24-25-26.
So-So: 4-27. None: 10-28.

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 2-7-9-10-16-22-23-25-26-27-28-30. So-So: 18-29. None: 13.

Tickets Please!-Coronet, 4/27/50. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 11-16-29-30. So-So: 26.

